

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1228
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USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 JERUSALEM 1785

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR LEWIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y CAPTION (EXDIS ADDED PER JERUSALEM SVC)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PBOR, PORG, MARR, UNSC, IS, LE
SUBJ: WEIZMAN ON SOUTH LEBANON

1. I MET WITH WEIZMAN IN HIS OFFICE JUNE 29 TO DISCUSS SOUTH LEBANON. ALSO PRESENT WERE HIS AID TEHILA, DATT AND BLACKWILL. WEIZMAN, WHO WAS IN A RELAXED MOOD, REGISTERED SURPRISE WHEN I TOLD HIM I WISHED TO ADDRESS THE SITUATION OF SOUTH LEBANON. HE SAID SOUTH LEBANON IS QUIET AND RELATIVELY STABLE, AND NOTED THERE HAD NOT BEEN A SHELL ON ISRAELI SETTLEMENTS IN TWO AND A HALF MONTHS. NO DOUBT FEIGNING SURPRISE, HE EXUDED QUESTION "SO, WHAT IS TO DISCUSS?"

2. NONETHELESS, I PUSHED ON. I ASKED WEIZMAN IF HE WAS ANY MORE SUCCESSFUL THAN I IN TRYING TO FIGURE OUT EXACTLY WHAT IS GOING ON IN SOUTH LEBANON. WE WERE GETTING CONFLICTING ACCOUNTS BOTH ABOUT THE NUMBERS OF PALESTINIANS IN SOUTH

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LEBANON AND HOW MANY WERE ARMED. I ASKED WEIZMAN HOW MANY PALESTINIANS THE ISRAELIS ESTIMATED WERE IN THE AREAS VACATED BY THE IDF. HE RESPONDED THAT THERE WERE NON IN THE CHRISTIAN ENCLAVES AND PERHAPS 400-500 IN THE OTHER AREAS FROM WHICH THE IDF WITHDREW. THE TERRORISTS WERE NOT LOCATED IN VILLAGES, BUT IN THE COUNTRYSIDE. THEY WERE WELL EQUIPPED, UNIFORMED SOLDIERS WITH WEAPONS AND GOOD RADIO COMMUNICATIONS CONTACT

WITH HEADQUARTERS NORTH OF THE LITANI. AND THESE SOLDIERS WERE INEXPLICABLY BEING PROVIDED SUPPLIES BY THE UN. I TOLD HIM THAT HIS NUMBER OF 400-500 WAS CONSIDERABLY HIGHER THAN OTHER ESTIMATES I HAD HEARD AND WONDERED IF IT INCLUDED UNARMED PALESTINIANS INFILTRATORS. HE NOTED IT PROBABLY DID, AND AGREED THAT A NUMBER OF AROUND 200 ARMED PERSONNEL WAS PERHAPS AS ACCURATE A FIGURE AS ANY. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE SPECIFIC NUMBER WAS REALLY NOT THE POINT. IT WAS UNIFIL'S OBLIGATION TO CLEAR ALL THE PALESTINIANS OUT OF THE AREA COVERED BY ITS MANDATE. THAT WAS THE ISSUE.

3. I NEXT ASKED WEIZMAN WHETHER THE NUMBER, WHATEVER IT WAS, WAS INCREASING. WHAT WAS THE CURRENT RATE OF INFILTRATION? HE RESPONDED THAT THE INFILTRATION RATE WAS VERY SMALL, PROBABLY ONLY A HANDFUL OF INDIVIDUALS WERE GETTING THROUGH. AS WEIZMAN SAID, THERE WERE "NO RED LIGHTS" AND NOTHING WAS HAPPENING TO CAUSE PARTICULAR ALARM.

4. I THEN ASKED IF HE COULD CATEGORIZE THE DEGREE OF AUTHORITY HADDAD AND SHIDIAC PRESENTLY EXERCISED OVER THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA UNITS. HE QUIPPED THAT THE MILITIA DID NOT HAVE THE "DISCIPLINE OF THE GRENADIER GUARDS" BUT HADDAD WAS ESSENTIALLY IN CONTROL. CERTAINLY, HE CONTINUED, THERE WAS MORE CONTROL IN THE SOUTH THAN ANYONE HAS IN THE NORTH.

5. RESPONDING TO MY QUESTION CONCERNING THE CURRENT RELATION-
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SHIP ON THE GROUND BETWEEN THE CHRISTIAN MILITIAS AND UNIFIL, WEIZMAN INDICATED THAT UNIFIL HAD NOT YET CONCLUDED THE DEPLOYMENT AS AGREED UPON AT THE MEETING BETWEEN ERSKINE AND GEN GAL, AND MAJORS HADDAD AND SHIDIAC, BUT IT SHOULD BE COMPLETED SOON. HE SAID THAT IF UNIFIL WANTED TO NEGOTIATE ANOTHER AGREEMENT ON ITS DEPLOYMENT IN THE ENCLAVES, IT SHOULD ASK FOR A MEETING AND GIVE IT A TRY. PERHAPS SOMETHING ELSE WAS POSSIBLE. BUT, NO ONE SHOULD COMPLAIN THAT UNIFIL DEPLOYMENT IS NOT BEING ACCOMPLISHED AS AGREED.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 JERUSALEM 1785

EXDIS

FROM AMBASSADOR LEWIS

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y CAPTION ADDED(EXDIS PER JERUSALEM SVC)

6. I THEN ASKED WEIZMAN POINT BLANK IF HE WAS PREPARED FOR THE LEBANESE ARMY TO MOVE SOUTH. HIS IMMEDIATE RESPONSE WAS THAT IT WOULD DEPEND ON WHICH LEBANESE FORCES WERE SENT. IF THE LAF WAS A SYRIAN OR PLO FORCE IN DISGUISE, IT WOULD, OF COURSE, NOT BE PERMITTED TO COME SOUTH. FURTHER, HE SAID THERE WOULD BE TROUBLE IF ANY LAF MOVEMENT WAS NOT AGREED TO IN ADVANCE BY HADDAD AND SHIDIAC. HE AGAIN REMINDED ME THAT HADDAD HAD BEEN FIGHTING FOR HIS LIFE FOR TWO AND A HALF YEARS, AND WOULD SEE THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE LEBANESE ARMY IN THE SOUTH AS A POSSIBLE PRELUDE TO BEING HUNG IN BEIRUT. INDEED, THE MORE WEIZMAN TALKED ABOUT POSSIBLE MOVEMENT SOUTH BY THE LEBANESE ARMY, THE MORE NEGATIVE HE BECAME. THE SITUATION WAS STABLE NOW, WEIZMAN STRESSED, AND THAT COULD WELL CHANGE IF THE ARMY CAME SOUTH. EVEN SO, HE WAS PREPARED TO DISCUSS IT. THOUGHTOUT THIS PART OF THE CONVERSATION, WEIZMAN REPEATEDLY AVERTED TO TROUBLE IN THE NORTH OF LEBANON AND ASKED WHY SO MUCH ATTENTION WAS BEING PAID IN BEIRUT TO THE SOUTH WHEN
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THERE WAS PLENTY OF SECURITY PROBLEMS IN BEIRUT ITSELF TO KEEP THE LEBANESE GOVERNMENT BUSY.

7. I THEN ASKED WEIZMAN IF HE DID NOT THINK IT WOULD BE A GOOD IDEA TO UPGRADE THE STATUS OF ILMAC AND DO REAL BUSINESS WITH THE LEBANESE UNDER ITS AUSPICES. HE SAID HE DID NOT OBJECT TO ILMAC PER SE. HOWEVER, IT WAS A PRE-1967 ARRANGEMENT AND DID NOT RECOGNIZE THE CHANGES THAT HAD TAKEN PLACE IN THE REGION, SPECIFICALLY THE GOOD FENCE. HOWEVER, HE WAS PREPARED TO USE ILMAC TO ENHANCE DISCUSSIONS WITH THE LEBANESE, INCLUDING THE QUESTION OF MOVING THE LAF TO THE SOUTH. WEIZMAN ALLOWED HE COULD "PRODUCE ANYONE FROM A THREE-STAR GENERAL TO A

LIEUTENANT FOR SUCH TALKS." PRESUMING SUCH TALKS LED SOMEWHERE, I ASKED WEIZMAN WHAT WOULD BE AN ACCEPTABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN DEPLOYED LAF IN THE SOUTH, IF IT HAPPENED, AND BOTH UNIFIL AND THE CHRISTIANS. HE SAID IMMEDIATELY HE COULD NOT PROVIDE AN ANSWER ON THIS SUBJECT WITHOUT TALKING TO HADDAD AND SHIDIAC. HE DID NOT GIVE DIRECT ORDERS TO HADDAD AND HIS CONGROL OVER HIM WAS "NOT ABSOLUTE." I CONCLUDED BY AGAIN URGING WEIZMAN TO DO HIS PART IN PUMPING SOME BREATH INTO ILMAC, AND STRESSING OUR BELIEF THAT IT IS IN ISRAEL'S BEST INTEREST TO FACILITATE FULL DEPLOYMENT OF UNIFIL IN THE SOUTH. HE SAID HE "UNDERSTOOD."

8. COMMENT: WEIZMAN WAS ON THE EDGE OF COMPLACENCY THROUGHOUT THIS DISCUSSION. HE PROJECTED SATISFACTION WITH THE SECURITY ON ISRAEL'S NORTHERN BORDER, THE RELATIVE STABILITY THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED IN SOUTH LEBANON, AND THE ACCOMMODATION UNIFIL IS MAKING WITH THE CHRISTIAN MILITIA. ON THE LATTER POINT, HE SAID IT WOULD SIMPLY TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK OUT AN EQUITABLE SOLUTION. I AM NOT SURE HOW MUCH OF THIS ROSY VIEW ON WEIZMAN'S PART ISSUES FROM HIS CONSISTENT DESIRE OVER THE LAST TWO MONTHS TO PORTRAY, BECAUSE OF HIS OWN PUBLIC IMAGE, CONFIDENTIAL

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THE ISRAELI INVASION OF LEBANON AS A SUCCESS. PROBABLY SOME. AT THE SAME TIME, HOWEVER, AND WHILE ISRAELIS WILL GO ON CRYING WOLF IN THE CURRENT SITUATION WITH RESPECT TO PALESTINIANS IN THE SOUTH, I WOULD GUESS THE GOI IS RELATIVELY SATISFIED AT THE MOMENT.

9. THAT, OF COURSE, WILL IMMEDIATELY CHANGE IF THE PALESTINIANS TAKE TO THE ROCKETS AGAIN, AND ISRAELIS SEEM UNWILLING TO ADMIT THAT INTEMPERATE BEHAVIOR BY THE CHRISTIANS COULD CAUSE JUST THAT CHAIN OF EVENTS TO OCCUR. I WILL KEEP MAKING THE POINT HERE.

10. THERE MAY BE A GLIMMER OF LIGHT IN WEIZMAN'S COMMENTS ABOUT ILMAC. I SUGGEST THAT AMBASSADOR PARKER CONVEY TO BOUTROS, "OUR IMPRESSION" THAT ISRAEL IS WILLING TO HAVE ILMAC DISCUSSIONS AT SENIOR MILITARY LEVELS, AND PERHAPS TO ADDRESS THE ISSUE OF THE MOVEMENT OF THE LAF TO THE SOUTH. (I WOULD NOT FINGER WEIZMAN BECAUSE HE MAY NOT BE ABLE TO DELIVER THE ISRAELI GOVERNMENT.) BUT EVEN IF WE GET SUCH SENIOR TALKS GOING BETWEEN THE LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS, I AM NOT CONVINCED MUCH GOLD WILL BE SPUN. THE ISRAELIS CONTINUE TO BE CONVINCED THAT THE LEBANESE THEMSELVES, ESPECIALLY GIVEN RECENT EVENTS IN THE NORTH, ARE NOT ABOUT TO SEND TROOPS TO THE SOUTH. AND EVEN IF THE GOL AGREED AMONG ITSELF TO TAKE THAT STEP THE CHRISTIANS COULD WELL KICK UP SUCH A RUCKUS THAT THE ISRAELIS WOULD BACK OFF. SO, DESPITE THE PLEAS OF BOUTROS, SARKIS AND HOSS, AND EVEN IF THE DEPLOYMENT OF THE LAF IN SOUTH BECOMES A LITMUS TEST FOR THE FUTURE OF LEBANON, I WOULD GUESS THAT THIS PROBLEM

IS NOT GOING TO GET SOLVED ANY TIME SOON. AT BEST, AND IF WE
ARE PERSISTENT AND LUCKY, IT MAY IMPROVE A DAY AT A TIME.
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